

# Title now in sight as Enfield falter again

THE gap between Rothmans Isthmian League leaders Enfield and second placed Wycombe Wanderers narrowed to just five points on Tuesday night after the latest set of Division One matches. While Wanderers were disposing of Walton and Hersham 4-0, Enfield dropped two valuable points in a 2-2 draw at Hitchin.

The gap now has been whittled down to the closest margin for several months. Wanderers could reduce it still further to two points if they win their game in hand and then the stage would be set for Enfield's visit to Loakes Park on May 8. Victory then, would put them a point clear. Dagenham were out of league action on Tuesday and now trail the Blues by five points with two matches in hand.

It was obvious that Enfield's run-in to the end of the season would be difficult. But few would have expected them to drop three points at Woking and also two at Hitchin. Wanderers also have some hard games remaining but if they can get into their best form, their confidence could well retain them the championship. They certainly look a good bet... their last defeat was back in December.

If they are to keep that title, however, they will have to play a good deal better than on Tuesday at Stompond Lane. Even before the two sides took the field the result was a formality and after a fair first half, the game slowly sank in obscurity in the second.

Manager Brian Lee rested Howard Kennedy in midfield and Steve Perrin upfront. Paul Birdseye returned for his first game for several weeks at right back, with Dave Alexander switching to midfield. Dylan Evans, Keith Searle and Tony Horseman made up the front three.

These changes obviously unsettled the side a little but against a team of Walton's calibre, the Blues had enough time to sort themselves out. The atmosphere at the excellent

## Walton 0, Wycombe Wanderers 4 Report by STUART EARP

Surrey ground was very strange. Instead of the usual 2,000 crowd for this annual fixture, there were only a few hundred. No cheering, no atmosphere — and the football suffered as a result.

### INEVITABLE

Walton, second from bottom in the table after finishing in the top five last year, fought bravely to deny Wycombe an early lead and succeeded for 16 minutes before Horseman stamped his inevitable name on the scoresheet. Malcolm Swain, who was outclassed by Searle, gave away a free kick five yards outside the box. The wall lined up in front of Horseman but "Bodger" curled a superbly placed shot into the bottom corner of the net. Poor Gary Bloom, the home 'keeper, could only stand and watch.

The goal obviously disheartened Walton who had suffered enough set-backs already this season with Wycombe rubbing it in. They began to allow the

visitors more time to create attacks and even referee Atkinson seemed to be against them, awarding a string of free kicks to the Blues.

Bloom saved brilliantly from Keith Mead's header in the 27th minute but his work came to nothing a few seconds later from the resulting corner. Horseman's flag kick curled into the six yard box where Evans rose up to head towards the far post. Mick Hill booted the ball clear but the officials decided the ball had crossed the line.

For the remainder of the half, Walton's five man defence — they played a 5-3-2 formation — managed to keep Wycombe in check but with such a defensive attitude, they could scarcely hope to trouble John Maskell, who had just one simple shot to collect in the first 45 minutes.

John has hardly needed a shower after his games for Wycombe recently and this was his 16th 'clean sheet' of the

season — a fine achievement.

By half time, Wycombe had secured their 10th corner but the goals remaining elusive despite Evans having one effort disallowed in the 37th minute.

In the third minute of the new half Mead almost made it 3-0 when Paul Birdseye's cross found the powerful centre back at the far post but Bloom fisted the ball away just as Keith turned to salute the goal with fist raised.

Despite their plight, Walton continued to fight on, competing for every ball and taking advantage of a casual approach by the visiting side. But there was little they could do about the third goal in the 59th minute. Alexander slung over a left foot cross to Horseman, 10 yards from the line. Tony got up well and arched a header over the defence and into the far corner of the net — another perfect piece of placing and one that left Bloom dumbfounded.

When Mick Holfield miscued a golden chance a few minutes later, Wanderers seemed to shut up shop. The standard sank lower and lower with passes going astray all too regularly. Alexander and Evans suffered more than most in this respect but all three of the front runners were guilty of poor finishing. Too much use of the square ball across the field halted the flow of attacks and the lack of urgency all round was plainly obvious.

The final goal in the 87th minute summed up the second half — scrappy. Bloom slipped as he went to collect a back pass, the ball rolling over the line for a corner. From the flag kick Walton failed to clear and amongst a sea of flying legs, Holfield finally thumped the ball home with the help of yet another deflection.

**WALTON:** G. Bloom, K. Barrow, B. Finn, P. Barson, M. Swain, D. Webb, M. Hill, B. Hennessey, V. Reynolds, J. Crowley, M. Elliott. Sub. S. Baker (not used).

**WYCOMBE:** J. Maskell, P. Birdseye (sub. S. Perrin 77 mins.), K. Mead, A. Phillips, G. Hand, D. Alexander, T. Reardon, M. Holfield, D. Evans, K. Searle, A. Horseman.

**Referee:** K. Atkinson (Crayford).

**Half-time:** 0-2. **Goalscorers,** Wycombe — Horseman 2 (16, 59), Evans (27), Holfield (87).

## LATEST TABLE

### ROTHMANS ISTHMIAN LEAGUE DIVISION ONE (Up to and inc. 22-4-75)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Enfield	37	27	5	5	71	23	86
Wycombe Wanderers	36	24	9	3	78	29	81
Dagenham	34	24	4	6	77	33	76
Tooting and Mitcham	37	21	8	8	56	40	71
Leatherhead	36	21	7	8	75	35	70
Ilford	37	20	9	8	87	45	69
Dulwich Hamlet	36	20	8	8	62	35	68
Slough Town	38	17	5	16	65	46	56
Oxford City	38	16	8	14	57	47	56
Sutton United	39	16	6	17	63	58	54
Bishop's Stortford	37	15	5	17	50	55	50
Walthamstow Avenue	38	13	8	17	52	53	47
Hitchin Town	36	13	8	15	50	59	47
Hendon	39	13	7	19	52	67	46
Leytonstone	41	12	7	22	41	58	43
Kingstonian	40	13	4	23	45	66	43
Hayes	40	10	12	18	51	64	42
Woking	38	11	8	19	55	66	41
Barking	35	11	7	17	51	65	40
Clapton	40	11	4	25	45	88	37
Walton and Hersham	39	9	3	27	35	83	30
Bromley	39	6	2	31	24	98	20